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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 005480

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR FR

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - PRESIDENT BUSH AND U.S.
POLICY - IRAQ - MIDDLE EAST MIDDLE EAST - GAZA PULLOUT
PARIS - FRIDAY, AUGUST 12, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

PRESIDENT BUSH AND U.S. POLICY - IRAQ - MIDDLE EAST
MIDDLE EAST - GAZA PULLOUT

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

CATHOLIC LA CROIX DEVOTES ITS LEAD AND EDITORIAL STORY TO THE GAZA PULLOUT, NOTING "THE COURAGE OF SHARON AND THE SETTLERS" WHICH IN TURN FORCES THE PALESTINIANS TO "SHOW THE SAME COURAGE" IF PEACE IS TO BE EXPECTED. LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION CARRIES AN OP-ED BY RENOWNED WRITER MAREK HALTER WHO CALLS FOR "SECULAR REALISTS" TO TAKE OVER ON BOTH SIDES "FROM RELIGIOUS EXTREMISTS" IN ORDER TO INSURE PEACE. IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO AMERICAN STUDIES EXPERT AT THE SORBONNE ANDRE KASPI PENS AN OP-ED ON THE LONG-LASTING AND "SPECIAL" RELATIONSHIP THAT BINDS THE U.S. AND ISRAEL. (SEE PART C)

LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE HEADLINES: "IRAQ: GEORGE BUSH AND AMERICA'S DOUBTS." INSIDE, CORRESPONDENT CORINE LESNES REPORTS ON THE INCREASING NUMBER OF U.S. CASUALTIES IN IRAQ AND ON THE LATEST U.S. POLLS ON AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR THE IRAQI INTERVENTION. HER ARTICLE NOTES PRESIDENT BUSH'S CONFAB AT HIS TEXAS RANCH WITH SECRETARIES RICE AND RUMSFELD. LESNES ALSO REPORTS ON GUANTANAMO AND A U.S. MILITARY PLAN AIMING TO EMPTY THE PRISON OF ABOUT HALF OF ITS DETAINEES.

IN A FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO REPORTS ON THE JIHADIST THREAT MADE IN FRENCH ON AL-ARABIYA TELEVISION: "WESTERN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES ARE CONCERNED BY THESE CALLS MADE BY A GENERATION OF JIHADISTS' BORN IN THE WEST (GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE, THE NETHERLANDS.) PARIS WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO IDENTIFY ONE OF THESE MEN WHO COULD BE A FRENCH CITIZEN."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

PRESIDENT BUSH AND U.S. POLICY - IRAQ - MIDDLE EAST

"PRESIDENT BUSH'S CRUCIAL SUMMER"
PIERRE ROUSSELIN IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (08/12): "WITH HIS POPULARITY RATINGS AT THEIR LOWEST, PRESIDENT BUSH KNOWS HOW MUCH IS RIDING ON HIS POLICIES THIS SUMMER. AT THE TOP OF THE LIST THERE IS THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE GAZA PULLOUT. PRESIDENT BUSH AND ARIEL SHARON ARE HAND IN HAND IN THIS PERILOUS ADVENTURE. IT IS IN BUSH'S BEST INTEREST THAT THE PULLOUT BE SUCCESSFUL. IRAQ IS ALSO IN A DECISIVE PHASE. THE DEADLINE FOR THE CONSTITUTION IS SET FOR MONDAY. AND IN SPITE OF THE SERIOUS QUESTIONS STILL UNANSWERED, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION CONTINUES TO THINK THAT THE DEADLINE WILL BE MET. FOR BUSH, A COMPROMISE THAT WOULD SATISFY THE SHIITES, THE SUNNIS AND THE KURDS WOULD BE A BEAUTIFUL SUCCESS. THAT WOULD GIVE SUBSTANCE TO THE GENEROUS IDEA OF 'DEMOCRATIZING' THE ARAB WORLD. CONVERSELY, FAILURE ON THE CONSTITUTION WOULD MAKE THINGS WORSE FOR THE U.S. AND ITS COALITION ALLIES. PUBLIC OPINION IN THE U.S. IS INCREASINGLY SHOWING DISSATISFACTION WITH THE WAR. FOR PRESIDENT BUSH THE LATEST POLLS INDICATE THAT THERE IS A WORRISOME EROSION OF POPULAR SUPPORT FOR HIS POLICIES. AS HIS SECOND TERM PROGRESSES, IT WILL BECOME HARDER AND HARDER FOR THE PRESIDENT TO BOUNCE BACK IN SPITE A GOOD ECONOMIC INDICATORS. THE HARD-LINE POSITIONS ADOPTED BY IRAN AND NORTH KOREA ARE NOT EXTRANEOUS TO THIS LOSS OF PUBLIC SUPPORT. TO REGAIN SOME OF THE LOST LUSTER THE PRESIDENT IS IN DIRE NEED OF GOOD NEWS."

MIDDLE EAST - GAZA PULLOUT

"COURAGE"

FRANCOIS ERNENWEIN IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX (08/12): "THE PULLOUT FROM GAZA COLLIDES WITH THE MYTHICAL TALE OF GREATER ISRAEL. FOR SOME SETTLERS, SHARON'S PRAGMATIC CHOICE IS ALSO A TRAGIC LOSS. WE MUST NOT TURN OUR BACKS ON THEIR FEELINGS OF SADNESS. FOR THE SETTLERS, SHARING WILL REQUIRE COURAGE AND TIME. SHARON'S COURAGE LIES IN THE RISK HE HAS TAKEN FOR A CHANCE TO A COMPROMISE. IT IS NOW THE PALESTINIANS' TURN TO SHOW COURAGE. FOR THEM, GAZA LOOKS VERY MUCH LIKE A POISONED GIFT. THE ISRAELI PULLOUT IMPLIES ASSUMING CERTAIN RESPONSIBILITIES

FOR THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY. TENSION BETWEEN PRAGMATISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM IS NOT A MONOPOLY OF ISRAEL. IT IS ALSO AT THE HEART OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, WHICH HAS BEEN WEAKENING ABBAS'S AUTHORITY. AND THIS IS WHERE SHARON HAS BEEN AT HIS CRAFTIEST: THE COURAGE HE HAS IMPOSED ON HIMSELF IS THE SAME COURAGE HE IS NOW DEMANDING FROM THE SETTLERS BUT WILL ALSO DEMAND TOMORROW FROM HIS PALESTINIAN COUNTERPART."

"U.S.- ISRAEL: A VERY SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP"
ANDRE KASPI OF THE SORBONNE UNIVERSITY IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (08/12): "PRESIDENT BUSH HAS SINCE THE START OF HIS SECOND TERM TAKEN ON MORE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT. THE COMING DAYS WILL BE DECISIVE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND WILL RE-ENFORCE EVEN MORE THE U.S. ROLE IN THAT REGION. THE U.S. WILL HELP THE PALESTINIANS BUILD A DEMOCRATIC STATE BUT WILL ASK MORE OF THEM. THE U.S. WILL HAVE ITS SAY ON THE SECURITY FENCE AND ON THE STATUS OF JERUSALEM. IN SHORT, IT WILL NOT BE ISRAEL THAT WILL DICTATE ITS VISION OF PEACE TO THE U.S. ISRAEL IS A FAITHFUL ALLY OF THE U.S., NOT ALWAYS AMENABLE, NOT ALWAYS DOCILE, BUT IT IS NOT A VASSAL. IT PREFERS TO HANDLE ITS OWN SECURITY. BUT IT CANNOT SURVIVE WITHOUT AMERICA'S MATERIAL, POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL AID. THE U.S. FOR ITS PART WANTS TO SAFEGUARD ITS FRIENDSHIPS AND INTERESTS IN THE ARAB-MUSLIM WORLD. HENCE THE VERY SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ISRAEL, WHICH DOES NOT PRECLUDE DIVERSIONS AND TEMPORARY TENSION. THE RELATIONSHIP IS AND WILL REMAIN ASYMMETRICAL. IT POSSESSES NEVERTHELESS AN UNDENIABLE PRICELESS QUALITY: IT IS LONG-LASTING." HOFMANN